ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

SOLDIERS' AID COMMISSION

2013-2014

JULY 2014

The Commission is committed to ensuring that it provides an appropriate mechanism for applications for financial assistance required by Veterans in need who enlisted in the Canadian armed forces and served overseas in a theatre of war or served with the armed forces in Canada. This assistance is also extended to any dependent relative of any Veteran of these wars. Members of the Commission are dedicated to providing a relevant and useful service to aging Veterans and their families in an effective and efficient way.

HISTORY, ORGANIZATION AND MANDATE

HISTORY

The Soldiers' Aid Commission is an Operational Service Agency, established in 1915, "to take care of and to find employment for members of the Canadian Expeditionary Force..."

The Soldiers' Aid Commission receives its legislative authority from the *Soldiers' Aid Commission Act, R.S.O. 1960*, and the *Soldiers' Aid Commission Amendment Act, 1970.*

The Ministry of Community and Social Services, Community and Developmental Services Division, Service Delivery and Supports Branch is responsible for the administration of the legislation under which the Commission operates.

ORGANIZATION

The Commission operates at arm's length from government ministries. The members are appointed by Order-in-Council and do not have fixed terms of appointment. It is stipulated in the legislation that "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may add such persons from time to time as members of the Commission as he deems advisable or may appoint a member in place of any member dying or retiring or becoming incapable of acting". The Commission selects candidates for Commissioners, recommends appointees to the Minister and elects its Chairperson. These members serve without remuneration but may claim out-of-pocket expenses.

The most recent Memorandum of Understanding between the Commission and MCSS was signed by the ministry and the Chairman in August 2011 for a new five-year term.

In 2013-2014 the Soldiers' Aid Commission included a Chairperson and five Commissioners plus one vacant position following the death of Commissioner William

Seyers in 2012.

MANDATE

The mandate of the Soldiers' Aid Commission is to administer applications for financial assistance made by Veterans and their dependent relatives. The Commission accepts applications for financial assistance made by Veterans in need or their dependents by way of the Royal Canadian Legion, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) and the Army, Air Force and Navy Benevolent Funds. Officials in Veterans' Affairs Canada offices, throughout Ontario, screen the appropriateness of the requests, after which they then make referrals to the Commission.

FUNDING, ELIGIBILITY AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

FUNDING

The Ministry of Community and Social Services provides the Commission with annual funding in the amount of $253,200 for payments to Veterans and/or their dependent relatives.

In November 2006, the Commission's mandate was extended to include Veterans who served with the armed forces in Canada and in 2011 they included Merchant Navy.

The ministry provides the Commission with administrative support and meeting room for its monthly meetings in Toronto.

ELIGIBILITY

An eligible Veteran is a person who resides in Ontario, enlisted in the Canadian armed forces and served overseas or served with the armed forces in Canada during the First or Second World Wars or the Korean War and is in financial need.

Veterans who served in the Merchant Navy during *WW11* are eligible for assistance from the Commission.

An eligible dependent is the spouse of an eligible Veteran with whom the Veteran lived at the time of the Veteran's death, or as a spouse in a common-law union of reasonable duration.

Assistance may also be extended to a natural or adopted child who at the time of the Veteran's death was financially dependent on the Veteran or, unable to manage his or her affairs and was a responsibility of the Veteran.

The applicant must have insufficient income and assets to pay for the service or the support he/she is requesting. The Commission employs a screening tool to assess financial need.

Financial assistance is available to resolve a specific problem when all other resources have been exhausted. Funding is provided on an individual basis and is not provided for long-term, ongoing assistance or for the purpose of arranging a funeral. Applications that are declined are usually due to a determination that the individual is "not in true financial need" or that the requested assistance is to meet an ongoing debt.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Commission provides financial assistance under two basic categories:

- Minor Disbursement Assistance and
- Major Disbursement Assistance.

Minor Disbursement Assistance:

Minor assistance covers items up to $300.00 in value. Any Commission member or designated employee may approve a request under $300.00.

On behalf of the Commission, counsellors in District DVA offices may grant up to $50.00 to eligible Veterans without prior authorization, and between $50.00 and $300.00 to eligible applicants with telephone authorization from the Commission. The DVA bills to the Commission on a monthly basis for reimbursement of grants made on behalf of the Soldiers' Aid Commission. These grants are then reviewed and approved if eligible at the following Commission's Meeting.

Major Disbursement Assistance:

Major assistance includes items and services ranging from $300.00 to $1000.00 in value. The amount may be increased at the discretion of the Commission to avoid unnecessary hardship. All applications for major assistance are reviewed at the Commission's monthly meetings. Those which require urgent attention are approved in a timely fashion and then reviewed at the next scheduled Commission meeting. Financial assistance can only be granted once in any 12-month period.

In the event of an application where funds are required immediately, two commissioners, after considering the eligibility and urgency of the application, may review and approve the application. The application is then discussed at the next Soldiers' Aid Commission meeting.

The Soldiers' Aid Commission provides funds for the following:

- Health related items such as hearing aids, glasses, prescription and dental needs;
- Home related items such as rent, repairs, moving costs, furniture, replacement/repair of roof and furnace;
- Specialised equipment such as assistive devices, wheelchairs and prosthetics, and
- Personal items such as clothing and other specialised support services.

The decisions to provide assistance to an individual are not subject to approval by the Minister or any official of the ministry, nor are they subject to appeal.

The applications are reviewed at the meeting for approbation or rejection. Once the meeting has been adjourned, cheques are prepared for all approved applications and signed by the Chairperson and a Commissioner or by two Commissioners if the Chairperson is not available.

Please see Appendix 1 for the Commission's 2013-2014 service data.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The Commission's Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Minister in August 2011 and this will expire in 2017.

Due to the increase in the cost of living and the high cost of many devices that Veterans request financial assistance for, the Commission now takes into consideration the approval of up to $2000.00 for individual applicants on an as-needed basis.

The Commission has increased the grant amount for Minor Disbursements from $200.00 to $300.00.

In the past fiscal year the Commission continued to receive enquiries from Area Counsellors and Provincial Officers regarding approval of applications from more recent Veterans who have served overseas in peacekeeping roles and those who have returned from Afghanistan.

The Commission has explored the possibility of expanding its mandate to include Veterans of the Canadian armed forces who served in peacekeeping roles and in Afghanistan. It was advised that this will require a legislative change.

APPENDIX 1

2013-2014 APPLICATIONS RECEIVED/FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED

Month	Major Applications Received	Minor Applications Received	# Declined	# Approved	Financial Assistance Provided
April 2013	10	0	1	9	$ 8,904.06
May 2013	12	0	2	10	$10,487.92
June 2013	12	0	0	12	$16,125.59
July 2013	13	0	1	12	$15,448.54
August 2013	9	0	0	9	$ 6,759.38
September 2013	14	0	0	14	$ 12,299.69
October 2013	17	0	0	17	$20,758.91
November 2013	12	0	2	10	$12,098.93
December 2013	16	0	0	16	$18,090.41
January 2014	6	0	1	5	$ 5,072.00
February 2014	22	0	0	22	$ 23,154.95
March 2014	18	0	3	15	$15,635.00
TOTAL	**161**	**0**	**10**	**151**	**$164,835.38**

APPENDIX 2

SOLDIERS' AID COMMISSION - COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES

James W. Smith, Chair

Mr. Smith was born in Hamilton, Ontario. He graduated from the Ontario Agriculture College in Guelph. During World War II, Mr. Smith served in the Royal Canadian Navy. He was employed with George Weston Ltd. as a Sales representative for twenty-five years.

Mr. Smith has demonstrated his commitment to his community and to Veteran's affairs in many ways. He organized and coached the Shamrock Minor Hockey League for 9 years. He was a member of the Parkwood Hospital Board in London for 9 years and Chairman of the Cancer Society in Lucan, Ontario for 6 years. Mr. Smith was the Master of Irving Masonic Lodge and the National Poppy Chairman. For the Dominion Command, he held the role of Executive Vice-President and sat on their Veterans Services Committee. Mr. Smith was also the National Director for the Royal Canadian Naval Association and the Provincial President for the Royal Canadian Legion.

Mr. Smith has been a member of the Soldiers' Aid Commission since 1986 and was elected as the Chairman of the Soldiers' Aid Commission in July 2005.

Homer R. Brooks, Commissioner

Mr. Brooks served in the Canadian Army Regular Forces and the Reserve Unit, 50th Field Regiment, Royal Canadian Artillery. He was also employed for over 30 years by The Government of Ontario, during which time he served in the Ministries of Mines and Northern Affairs, Correctional Services and the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Brooks was born in Omemee, Ontario. His educational background includes Military Police Training at the Canadian Provost Corps School, (Canadian Army Reg.),

Certificate in Correctional Services and Certified Northern Affairs Officer.

Mr. Brooks' community and professional involvement include long standing membership in The Royal Canadian Legion, Past President of the Moosonee Lions Club and Fenelon Falls Rotary Club, and a former member of the Ontario Real Estate Association. He is presently a school bus driver with First Student Transportation Services in Bowmanville.

Mr. Brooks and his wife Helen live in Oshawa Ontario and he was appointed a Commissioner on the Soldiers Aid Commission in 2008.

Alfred H. L. Harris, Commissioner

Mr. Harris is one of the newest Commissioners of the Soldiers' Aid Commission and was born in Barrie Ontario where he lived until 1959. He served in The Royal Canadian Air Force and has active service as a Radar Technician and Reserve Officer.

His education background consists of Certificate Course in Business from the University of Toronto and Chartered Life Underwriter.

Mr. Harris's employment career has spanned over sixty-eight years starting from1946 when he joined the London Life Insurance Company in Barrie to the present as a self-employed Chartered Life Underwriter, assisting over 3000 families with Estate Planning.

Mr. Harris has held many executive positions such as President and Chairman with the Canadian Association of Insurance and Financial Advisors, The Institute of Chartered Life Underwriters and The Estate Planning Council of Toronto.

Mr. Harris' volunteering spirit has resulted in his involvement with many organisations. He was a member of the Metro Toronto Board of Trade for 35 years, The Naval Veterans Association, The Rameses Temple of Shrine and Sheba Shrine Club, The Granite Club, and has been active in The Royal Canadian Legion for over 60 years. He presently resides in Toronto with his wife Phyllis. Mr. Harris was appointed as a Commissioner to the Soldiers' Aid Commission in June 2008

Colin Rowe, Commissioner

Mr. Rowe was born in Guyana South America and in 1969 at the age of twenty, immigrated to Canada. In November of that year, he joined the Ontario Public Service in what was then the Department of Social and Family Services. Through part-time studies, Mr. Rowe graduated in 1972 from the Social Service Administration program at the former Ryerson Polytechnical Institute.

Until his retirement in November 1999, Mr. Rowe's entire public service career was in the Ministry of Community and Social Services and primarily in the Income Maintenance program. In 1997 he was appointed Manager in the Ministry's Information Systems Branch with responsibility for implementing systems changes in support of Social Assistance Reform initiatives, and the Year 2000 upgrade and retrofit of the Ministry's Social Assistance mainframe applications.

Mr. Rowe is a forty year member of the Royal Canadian Legion and served for fifteen years in the Canadian Armed Forces Militia. He retired in June 2002 from his position as the Regimental Drum Major for the Band of the Governor General's Horse Guards, Canada's senior militia regiment, but maintains a busy schedule as editor for several military publications. Upon retiring from the OPS in 1999, he returned to academia and earned a Music Diploma at Humber College in the Jazz Studies program, graduating in June 2002 with a major in Arranging and Composition. He still performs as a free-lance musician (trombonist) and arranger in the Greater Toronto Area and is the current Drum Major of the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines Association in Cobourg, Ontario.

Mr. Rowe and his wife Agnes have two adult sons and seven grand-children. They enjoy the easy pace of rural life in Bowmanville, where they have resided since 1998. Mr. Rowe was appointed to the Soldiers' Aid Commission as a Commissioner in December 2002.

John Stapleton, Commissioner

Mr. Stapleton is a writer, instructor and Innovations Fellow with the Metcalf Foundation <http://metcalffoundation.com/what-we-fund/innovation-fellowship/>. He worked for the Ontario Government for 28 years in the areas of social assistance policy and operations and was Research Director for the Task Force on Modernizing Income Security for Working-Age Adults in Toronto <http://www.stchrishouse.org/get-involved/community-dev/modernizing-income-work-adults/> .

John worked for the Ontario Government in the Ministry of Community and Social Services and its predecessors for 28 years in the areas of social assistance policy and operations. He is a volunteer with St. Christopher House and Woodgreen Community Services of Toronto. He teaches public policy and is a member of 25 in 5. John teaches a popular course on public policy <http://openpolicyontario.com/course-offerings/> for community advocates.

John has published op-eds in the Globe & Mail, National Post and the Toronto Star. He has written reviews for the Literary Review of Canada and written articles and studies for Ideas that Matter, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the C.D. Howe Institute, the Canadian Working Group on HIV and Rehabilitation, the Caledon Institute, The Toronto Dominion Financial Group, the Metcalf Foundation, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, The Toronto City Summit Alliance and many others. John

serves on the Board of Directors of the Daily Bread Food Bank, West Scarborough Community Legal Services, and he is the President of the Canadian Horse Racing Hall of Fame.

William Earl Thomas, Commissioner

Mr. Thomas was born in Toronto Ontario. He joined the Army Cadet Corp in 1944 and served until 1947 as a Lance Corporal.
Mr. Thomas attended Ryerson Institute of Technology where he obtained his Diploma as an Engineering Technician. Over the next 48 years Mr. Thomas worked for four companies in both Technical and Management positions. Mr. Thomas has been a member of the Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists (CTE) since 1957. Mr. Thomas demonstrates his commitment to his community by serving as a volunteering with the Rockcliff Nursing Home, St Ninians Anglican Church, Scarborough Recreation and Parks, Wexford Baseball Organisation and the YMCA.

Mr. Thomas is actively enjoying retirement he lives in Scarborough with his wife Irena and was appointed as a Commissioner of the Soldiers' Aid Commission in June 2008.

William C. Seyers, Commissioner

Sadly, Mr. Seyers, the former Chair and longest serving member of the Commission (January 1984)-, passed away on December 28, 2012 after a brief period of illness.